

# From the President

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We are in full swing on the new annual Congress schedule. The deadline for panel and paper proposals has passed, and the proposals have been sent to the track chairs. The same is true for nominations for the various awards. Everybody, from panel organizers to award committee members and the Secretariat, is working at an accelerated pace. There have been a few transition pains, but they were and continue to be managed with skill and patience by the outstanding LASA staff.

Let me take this opportunity to thank the staff and all the volunteers who make LASA work. Every year, dozens and dozens of people agree to serve as track chairs, section chairs, and members of award committees, all tasks that can be quite time consuming. All of these collective endeavors by LASA members promote the goals of the Association in that they contribute to advancing knowledge and teaching about Latin America, and to celebrating extraordinary achievements of those engaged in research and knowledge dissemination.

Coordinating all these volunteers and activities requires a full-time staff. In comparison to similar professional associations, the LASA Secretariat actually works with a small staff in relationship to the number of members. What they lack in numbers, they make up in professionalism and dedication and experience. Milagros Pereyra-Rojas has been our Executive Director for eight years, and she has made the LASA Secretariat into a highly efficient operation, skillfully combining the use of both technology and human brain power to perform a multitude of managerial tasks. Sandy Klinzing has been with LASA even longer, and her extensive network of contacts and institutional memory constitute a huge asset in her work with the sections and with fundraising. Israel

Perlov, Maria Cabezas, and Pilar Rodriguez round out the staff who work tirelessly on behalf of LASA members. They try to bend over backwards to help members with all kinds of concerns while strenuously adhering to the standard of equitable treatment of all members.

Looking ahead to the 2013 Congress, we are in the process of organizing invited panels around the Congress theme "Toward a New Social Contract?" as well as panels and workshops of general interest to the membership. We hope to take advantage of the Washington location to get a high-ranking member of the U.S. Administration to talk to us about relations with Latin America. We have also invited Secretary General Insulza, from the Organization of American States, to share his views on hemispheric issues with us.

One issue that has generated considerable energy invested in petitions is the availability of on-site child care. The Secretariat has solicited bids, and the costs are astounding. We are looking at a total cost of around \$7,500, charged by the child care providers and the hotel. Part of this is insurance, and part of it rental of equipment, provision of food (which cannot be brought in from outside and therefore is assessed at hotel prices), and wages. When LASA did offer on-site child care, there were never more than 20 children registered. Unfortunately, most of these are fixed costs. Thus, even if LASA subsidizes child care by a couple of thousand dollars (financed by registration fees), the cost per child to be paid by parents would be between \$250 and \$300.

Turning to this issue of the *Forum*, we have a fascinating discussion of the development of social science institutes and scholars in Latin America. In the time span of roughly a quarter century, since the transitions to



democracy, the social sciences have flourished in Latin America. During the dictatorships, opportunities for social scientists in higher education and research were very restricted, particularly in political science and sociology. Today, scholars at social science institutes in Latin America produce cutting edge research. Within this general trend, there are distinctive national experiences, which are highlighted in the three investigative pieces. Within these national experiences, there are further differences between scholars with different backgrounds and different institutional affiliations. Obviously, the development of the social sciences in Latin America is still in considerable flux, but the contributions to the *Forum* offer us a valuable snapshot of the present.

Our Debates section in this issue focuses on stateness in Latin America. There is no dispute that the state is at the center of the life of a nation, but over the past few decades there has been surprisingly little research done on the state itself in Latin America. Studies have concentrated on society's demands on and reaction to the state, on rules about access to and exercise of state power, and on state policies and their effects, but the nature and capacities of the state apparatus itself have received much less attention. The contributors to the *Forum* throw light on state capacities from different angles, such as state interaction with different kinds of challengers and with citizens demanding assistance, and financial relations between the central state and subnational units. Arguably, the most fundamental aspect of stateness is the capacity to enforce the rule

ON THE PROFESSION

## Social Science in Latin America

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of law, to regulate relations both between citizens and the state and among citizens. This capacity is shaped by the strength of challengers in various forms, from organized crime to regional autonomy movements. Another fundamental aspect of stateness is the capacity to provide social services, from health and education to sanitation. These services are typically provided by subnational political entities, which means that overall state capacity is heavily influenced by the fiscal arrangements that provide resources to these subnational entities. State capacity to guarantee the rule of law and provide social services, of course, is central for the capacity of a society and economy to provide citizens with the chance to build the type of life that citizens choose. ■

The three contributions to *On the Profession* analyze different aspects of the political economy of knowledge production in Latin America. Jointly, the three pieces provide a nice overview of how the interaction between local academic structures, funding opportunities, and training options shape different patterns of social science knowledge production in the region.

In the piece by Chernya, Sierra, and Snyder, the authors analyze the ways in which the interaction between national and international funding structures affects the nature and scope of social science research in Peru, Argentina, and Mexico. Malamud and Freidenberg's article looks at the Southern Cone (i.e., Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay) to unveil the different career paths of those who pursue Ph.D programs abroad. They find that while Brazilians usually return to their home country, Argentineans and Uruguayans usually do not. These patterns, they argue, could be explained by the incentives that the academic market provides in each case. David Altman's contribution completes the overview, analyzing the (ISI) productivity of twenty-one political science and international relations departments in the region. This last piece also depicts the varying nature of political science departments in the region. ■